FORMS OF CYPRIOTISM IN THE TURKISH CYPRIOT COMMUNITY: OBSTACLES AND NECESSARY CONDITIONS

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I would like first to give you some examples and to explain what I mean with the word "Cypriotism". It was at the beginning of the year 1927 when Ronald Storrs, the British Colonial Governor of Cyprus, wanted to use for the first time officially this term in the government offices instead of the term "native" which he thought could be degrading. He mentioned about this decision in his report, dated 9 June 1932. Mr.Amery, the Minister of Colonies also wanted that the subject of "Cypriot patriotism" would be taught more at the Greek Cypriot schools in order to stop the dissemination of nationalism among the pupils. Mr. Amery also put the idea forward that the Cypriots should have a flag of their own and this new flag could be introduced together with the liberal constitutional amendments in 1925. But the authorites at the Ministry of Colonies did not approve the idea of banning the use of the Greek flag in Cyprus.[1]

The growing resentment of the Greek Cypriot masses against the British colonial regime which culminated in the formation of the Communist Party of Cyprus in 1926 caused also the reaction of the Greek Cypriot nationalists, who were alarmed by the policy of the Communist Party, which was against the enosis policy of the nationalists. The British colonial administration was also alarmed that the Communists could have wider support of the people and they could raise a struggle for the independence of the island. Although the CP did not have a followship among the T/C community, there were some contacts, for example the correspondence between the communist newspaper Neos Antropos and the T/C Birlik newspaper in 1925 or the organisation of the T/CS workers in the common Labour Centre in Limassol in 1924.[2] The colonialists were quick enough to turn their strategy of supporting Cypriotism into tolerating the nationalist propaganda, made in the both communities.

The Turkish Cypriots had always been against the union of the island with Greece (enosis) and since from the start of the British administration in Cyprus, they raised every year their voice at the opening ceremony of the Legislative Council, where the G/C representatives spoke about their demand for enosis. But the nationalist attitude of the G/C members of the parliament did not stop the T/C members from cooperating with their compatriots in economical matters. For example, Hafiz Ziyai Efendi and Dervish Pasha voted in June 1902 together with the G/C members for the abolition of the Tribute paid to the Ottoman Empire by the Cypriots, which should be paid only by the British. A government official went to the mosque and provoked the T/Cs to protest against this cooperation with the G/CS. Irfan Efendi and the deputy Mufti also spoke at the mosque and provoked the community against the Moslem members of the Legislative Council. The two T/C members of the Legislative Council were forced after this event to change their policy of cooperation with the G/Cs at the parliament in order not to be accused of being pro G/C. It is interesting to note that Irfan Efendi was appointed in February 1904 as the T/C delegate of Evkaf by the British colonial government.[3]

Sir Harry Luke wrote that when Britain declared the annexation of the island with the British Empire, it was his duty to tell the news to the T/C notables who were together in an engagement ceremony of Mehmet Munir's daughter on 5 November 1914 at the house of Mufti Ziyai. They heard the news with "dignified resignation".[4] The T/C leaders visited the other day the British High Commissioner and told him that they accepted the change of status of the island and that they would be loyal to the British administration. On the other hand the chief kadi, Mufti, Irfan Bey and Sevket Bey sent a letter to the

British authorities that they were against the demand of the G/Cs for enosis and instead of this, the island should be permanently b a part of the British Empire. If enosis would be realized, it would be a disaster for the 60 thousand Muslims of Cyprus.[5]

As the G/C nationalists raised their nationalist campaign for enosis and disseminated the felings of mainland Greek nationalism in Cyprus, a section of the T/C elite also started to import mainland Turkish nationalism into Cyprus. The deputy of the British High Commissioner in Cyprus, Mr.Stevenson, sent a secret report to Vicont Milner, dated 26 April 1919, that Young Turks were active in Cyprus and that Mehmet Esat, Dr.Huseyin Behic and Hasan Karabardak were the leaders of a party called "Union with Turkey".[6] They disseminated a rumour that the Greeks would attack the Turks during the Easter week, causing enmity between the T/Cs and G/Cs. The T/C members of the Parliament, Mr. Irfan and Mr.Hami were not involved in these activities. The main instigators of these events, who provoked the T/Cs to make a rebellion, were arrested and imprisoned by the British.

According to the minutes of the Legislative Council, the T/C members of the parliament startd to demand "the return of the island to the Ottoman Empire" more often during the period between March 1911 and June 1917.[7]

Because of the difficult years of the First World War, there was no publication of any T/C newspapers between 1915 and 1919, therefore two weekly newspapers, Dogru Yol (8 September 1919) and Soz (15 February 1921) started their publication in order to inform the T/CS about the developments in the world, in Turkey and on the island. In 1922, there were 23 newspaper published in Cyprus, 6 of them being in Turkish language. The top-selling newspaper was the G/CS owned Eleftheria (1700-1800 copies) and the second in the row was the T/CS owned Soz newspaper (1200 copies).[8]

Mrs.Beria Remzi Ozoran, the daughter of the owner of the Soz newspaper, gave the following information about the subjects dealt with in the T/C press of those years:

"In these newspapers and journals, there were articles dealing with what the T/Cs should do, in order to continue the existence of the Turkish entity on this green island and in order to live on these territories with dignity. Struggle against illeteracy, organisation of the T/C community, economic development, the establishment of a national bank were the necessity of the day. The majority of the intellectuals who were civil servants and the teachers were under difficult conditions, because of the high cost of living and the T/C farmers were in crisis because of their debts. The Turkish monuments in Cyprus should be preserved. The T/Cs should come together and form companies so that they could have a strong economy in order to survive under a foreign administration.

The T/C press followed the liberation struggle in Anatolia step by step and collected money for the victims of the disaster in Anatolia through solidarity campaigns. The T/C newspapers did not hesitate also to defend the rights of the T/Cs against the G/Cs' demands for enosis." [9]

The publication of the Soz newspaper was appreciated in Ankara with great interest and it received many years financial support from the Turkish governments. Soz was the main organ which helped the dissemination of the Kemalist ideas among the T/Cs. For the internal affairs, the editor and the owner of the Soz newspaper, Mehmet Remzi wrote on 7 March 1921 the following under the title "Our Parliament":

"Today our Parliament is going to be opened. It is the duty of the government to tell the G/Cs that the enosis issue which terrorized the people of the island is closed once and for all. This dangerous game is being played so many times that our security-loving people cannot bear it anymore. If this thorny issue which damaged the relations between the two communities of the island will be removed, the parliamentarians of both sides will

have enough time to investigate the real needs of the country and they will negotiate the mutual draft laws in an atmosphere of trust... If the Christian members think that they have more rights than their compatriots Turkish Cypriots on this island, then they have to accept that the T/C members do not tolerate the discussion of Cyprus-Greek issue at the Legislative Assembly."

We read in the Alithia newspaper of 30 April 1921 a letter of a T/C ex-member of the parliament. He supported the cooperation of the T/C and G/C members and he pointed the fact that it was only in the last 10-15 years that the T/C and G/C members made it as a habit to complain mutually in the Parliament. Whereas in the early days of the British Administration, they cooperated in local matters.[10]

We can find other articles published in the G/C prss. For example, Mr.Ioannis Clerides, was writing in Eleftheria of 2 April 1926 under the title "If the T/CS would cooperate with the G/CS" the following:

"Our Moslem brothers have to understand that they have common interests with us and the progress and the prosperity of both the G/Cs and T/Cs depends on the cooperation of the two communities.[11]

Similar views were expressed by Mr.Yorgo Hadjipavlou in an article published in the "Nea Laiki" newspaper of 23 September 1927: "We could go forward only if we cooperate with the T/Cs." He wrote three months later again in the same newspaper on 23 December 1927 that there was no chance of cooperation in the Legislative Council, since the T/C members were under the influence of the British colonial government through Evkaf. Therefore the G/Cs should support the populist T/Cs so that they can enter the parliament and get rid of the pro-Evkaf leaders. Only these progressive T/Cs could reject to be the secret keys of the government. Mr.Hadjipavlou went further and recommended that leaflets in Turkish should be printed and the deficiency of the T/C members in defending the local interests should be exposed to the T/CS community.[12]

We observe here that since the beginning of the British administration in Cyprus, the number of the T/Cs together with the British members of the Legislative Council were designed to be equal to the number of the G/C members. The representation of the both communities was reflected in the parliament, not according to the ratio of the population. The T/C minority was seen politically as a guarantee against the enosis demands of the G/C majority. There were separate electoral lists and separate mainland-nationalist-oriented educational programmes for the T/Cs and G/Cs, which hindered them to develop a common Cypriot political policy against the British colonial administration.

This was already stressed by Dr.Eyyub, a T/C member of the parliament in his speech at the parliament's opening ceremony on 11 November 1925. He said that the G/Cs and the G/Cs were not ready for a full cooperation on political matters. So they had to put aside the political questions and cooperate in other issues which would bring prosperity to the whole island. We see that this was realized later through the common activities of the MPs in the struggle against trachoma, tuberculosis, venerial diseases, for the abolition of the tax of tithes, for a forest policy and for the financial support of the farmers.

We observe again during the elections of 1930 that Mr.Yorgo Hadjipavlou supported the election campaign of Nedjati Bey, who was the Kemalist candidate against Mr.Munir, the Turkish delegate of Evkaf. He was supported by Asaf Bey, the Turkish consul in Cyprus. While the populist Mr.Nedjati spoke at the Parliament that Cyprus was a part of Anatolia, the pro-British Dr.Eyyub, also an MP, criticized in his articles published in the pro-Evkaf "Hakikat" newspaper, that the nationalists wanted to copy everything done in Turkey, even if the two countries had different administrative and social structures.[13]

Mr.Nedjati was named by the British governor Ronald Storrs in his memoirs as "that little Turk, the 13th G/C member of the Legislative Council"[14] When Mr.Nedjati voted on 28 April 1931 together with the G/C members against the draft Law of Customs Tariff and Revenue, the automatic support of the T/C members failed, since the other two T/C MPs were absent during the voting. This was another case of cooperation after the one when the T/C and G/C members voted together against the Draft Budget of 1927 in the Legislative Council.

When the British colonial government wanted to impose the aborted draft law, the pro-enosis nationalist events of October 1931 started by the G/Cs. The British administration took this opportunity to abolish the Legislative Council and it suspended the constitutional order which followed a period of oppression until 1941.

During the oppressive period of the new British colonial governor Mr.Palmer, the Greek and Turkish nationalisms were put under pressure for a while. On the other hand the movement of the working people was getting strong after 1942. The British used both nationalisms as a remedy in order to oppress the working people. Nationalism was seen less harmful than a common front of the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot workers against British Administration.

In the 1930's the nightmare of the British colonialists was that the concept of Cypriotism would be in the foreground and leave Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot nationalisms behind. Mr.Palmer, the British Governor, was of the opinion that after the idea of "Enosis" was forgotten, "Cypriot nationalism" would replace it. According to Mr.Palmer, the only way to stop or postpone this development was to establish a new administrational structure which would provoke inter-regional difference of identity. The Governor Palmer, in a secret report sent to London on 23 October 1936, was saying the following:

"In order to have ease in the future on the island, we have to continue the administration on the basis of exceptis excipiendis (opening the way to exceptions), on the basis of districts. Thus the concept of Cypriot nationalism -which will be emerging as a new concept after Enosis becomes an eroded value- should be pushed away as much as possible and left in the dark. Now it is almost not living. Cypriots are either their district's "nationalists", or they are Greek or Turks." [15]

During the oppressive period which started with Governor Palmer, we observe the cooperation of the G/Cs and T/Cs for the autonomy of the island, a common political aim. The T/C "Ses" newspaper in 1937 under the title "Political Association" reproduced a news item from the G/C "Eleftheria" newspaper that a joint political association by the G/Cs and T/Cs was established for the support of the autonomy of the island, with branches established in every town, besides Nicosia. The well-known Nicosia advocate Mr.Yiannis Clerides was the leader of this Political Association. Ex-member of the Legislative Council M.Hami, member of the Larnaca Town Council advocate Mr.Celal Shefik, member of the Limassol Town Council dentist Mr.Nazif were among the T/C notables who participated at the formation of this Association in their respective towns.[16]

The political cooperation of some T/Cs with their compatriots was attacked immediately in the T/C press. An article under the title "Is the political and cultural unity of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots going to start instead of a Turkish-British cooperation?" was published in "Ses" newspaper of 25 June 1937 (No.99) to this effect where the participation of Mr.Mustafa Hami, one of the ex-Turkish Cypriot members of the Legislative Council which was closed, was being criticised and the following was written:

"If this situation continues, the government will soon see the unity of policy and culture of Turkish and Greek Cypriots rather than the traditional cooperation between the Turks and the British in Cyprus. Today's policy is the shortest way for appreciation of this aim by the government. Otherwise Turkish Cypriots' complaints should be heard and satisfied. It is certain that central government will think likewise."

This main article which was published in the "Ses" newspaper, one of the Turkish Cypriot press organs defending Turkish nationalism and Kemalism, gives us a good idea of the dominant Turkish Cypriot way of thinking.

We have to point out that, right after these developments, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots fought and served together during the Second World War on the side of the British on various fronts and at home they organised themselves in the same trade unions against difficult economic conditions. At this point, it has to be emphasised that the enosis policy of the Progressive Party of the Working people of Cyprus (AKEL), which was formed in 1941 was the biggest obstacle for T/Cs' political cooperation.

In 1955, when the EOKA's gunned terrorist activities started for the abolition of the British administration and for the union of Cyprus with Greece, the British colonial administration used the Turkish Cypriot police and commandos against the EOKA. The collaborationist Turkish Cypriot leadership adopted the British plans which aimed at the partition of the island (taksim) as a political solution against enosis. This was enough to cause a conflict among the Cypriots.

The Turkish Cypriot underground organisation TMT forced the Turkish Cypriot trade unions not to cooperate with the G/C trade unions, thus destroying the foundations of the common economical and political struggle. At the end of the day, neither the Greek Cypriots' aim for enosis, nor the Turkish Cypriots' aim for taksim was materialised, but a limited independence was given to the partnership republic of Cyprus which was established in 1960. The unity of action of all Cypriots could not be developed under this new common shared aim and this caused new bitternesses.

On the day of independence, 16 August 1960, we see the first issue of the T/CS newspaper "Cumhuriyet" (Republic) which was published by the two T/C advocates, Ahmet Muzaffer Gurkan and Ayhan Hikmet. For the first time, the ideas of Cypriotism was being propagated among the T/Cs, through an oppositional newspaper and later by the organisation of a political party. The "Cumhuriyet" writers were supporting the news that the independence of Cyprus meant, not to union the island with one nation or state, but to govern Cyprus by the Cypriots. Unfortunately these staunch supporters of the Republic of Cyprus were killed by the T/C underground organisation TMT on 23 April 1962, on the pretext that "they served the interests of the G/Cs". They were warned before they were murdered that "if they did not believe in the existence of the national struggle of the T/CS, they should be silenced."

Dervish Ali Kavazoglou, who was a T/C member of Central Committee of the AKEL was also murdered together with his G/C trade-unionist friend on 11 April 1965. He was against the partitionist policies of the T/C leadership and for the friendship and cooperation of the two communities in Cyprus.

As the imperialist foreign powers and their tools on the island were against the independent development of the Republic of Cyprus which followed an independent non-aligned foreign policy, they were continuously inciting nationalistic and anti-communist feelings of the island's population. We observe again in this period that a Cypriot awareness could not be developed to a sufficient degree. The guarantors of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cyprus were members of the NATO,

i.e. Britain, Greece and Turkey and they did not want to see a Cypriot state, free of their influences for reasons known to themselves.

On the other hand, Archbishop Makarios, the President of the Republic did not believe in the idea of creating a new Cypriot nation. He told to an Italian newspaper that the London Agreements created a new state, but not a new nation.[17]

In those times, contrary to the processes in Europe, many African and Asian states were formed before the consolidation of a nation. In the case of Cyprus, the partnership lasted only three years, because the T/C leadership withdrew from the state apparatus. The intercommunal clashes between the pro-enosis G/Cs and the pro-partition T/Cs complicated the solution of the ethnic-national question in Cyprus.

We observe that the separatist policy of the Turkish Cypriot leadership since 1958 was one of the reasons that Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots could not have a common political aim during the period until 1974. In the summer of 1974, the coup d'Etat was staged in Cyprus by the Greek Junta of Athens against President Makarios and this followed by the Turkish invasion and the occupation of the island's 37% territory. The G/Cs were forced to leave the occupied areas and the T/Cs living in south of the cease-fire line were transported to the northern part. The new state of affairs forced the T/Cs to have closer relationship with Turkey. The T/Cs became under the direct influence of the mainland Turkish economy, politics and culture.

The Soz newspaper which started its publication in 1978 turned to be the main critic of the intervention of the Turkish politicians into the T/C internal affairs. The influx of mainland Turkish settlers in the occupied areas threatened the existence of the T/Cs. This lead them to re-identify their communal characteristics as T/C community. A series of panels on T/C identity, folkloric exhibitions and historical research were done in the 1980's.[18]

The T/C intellectuals started to ask themselves the question "who are we?" as they looked into the history of their cultural heritage. As it is well-known, the cultural, the scientific and the literary heritage are the three important components of the national consciousness. Here we see the responsibility of the researchers for the development of a common Cypriot consciousness. They have to research the common cultural heritage and use these common elements for a common political aim. The cooperation between the two communities in the commercial and social life and in trade union movement in the past are the good examples of the coexistence of the two communities.

The class character of the state has a big role to play in the formation of the Cypriot consciousness. There has to be a clearly designed state policy for the support of a Cypriot identity. The organs of the mass media should also play a constructive role in this respect since they can easily reach to the homes of almost all citizens.

We see that especially after 1974, two different identities emerged: One in the north of the divide, possessing the separatist TRNC as an expression of T/Cs' nationalist identity and another one in the south of the divide, as the sole owner of the Cypriot state which has distinctively a G/C character. This is similar to the prediction of the British Governor Palmer in 1937: "The concept of Cypriot nationalism -which will be emerging as a new concept after Enosis becomes an eroded value- should be pushed away as much as possible and left in the dark. Now it is almost not living. Cypriots are either their district's "nationalists", or they are Greek or Turks."

The activities of the News Cyprus Association which was formed in March 1975 were aimed to preserve the existence of the state of Cyprus and to avert the danger of partition by behaving first as Cypriots and then as a member of the respective community. Unfortunately in the past 30 years, this movement of intellectuals could not turn into a

political movement which could organise great masses of T/Cs and G/Cs under a common Cypriot identity.

In order to reach at this main goal, there should be common political parties of T/Cs and G/Cs, seeking common political aims. The full equality of all the communities living on the island in the fields of politics, economy and culture could only be achieved through common political parties which will fight for a democratic federal state and against all kinds of separatism and discrimination. A correct policy for the solution of the problem of nationalities is indispensable and this is the responsiblity of the party of the working class, the AKEL. Unless the AKEL review its policy for the T/Cs and turn to them, no step could be achieved with the existing nationalist policies.

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[5] Sir George Hill, A History of Cyprus, Cambridge 1972, p.521

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[11] Quoted from Costas P.Kyrris, Peaceful Coexistence in Cyprus under British rule (1878-1959) and After Independence, Nicosia 1977, p.44

[12] G.S.Georghallides, ibid, p.67

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[15] Quoted in Ahmet An, Development of Cypriot Awareness, Nicosia 1998, p.43

[16] Ahmet An, Why was it not possible to develop a Cypriot Awareness?, in Quo Vadis Cyprus?, Istanbul 2002, p.264-274

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[18] Ahmet An, An Overview of the Research Studies on the Identity of the T/CS, in "Articles on the Turkish Cypriot Culture", Nicosia 1999, p.222-230